

# Audubon Onward!

AUDUBON'S IMPACT IN ALASKA  
2024



# Audubon Onward!

## DEAR FRIENDS,

This report invites you to look more closely at our collective impact over the past year to protect birds and the places they need in Alaska. *Audubon Onward!* provides important updates and conservation gains through our forward-looking plan to address the mounting threats of climate change and biodiversity loss—threats that not only impact birds, but people and the planet, too. The following pages underscore an urgency of now, and Audubon’s bold response.

Over the past half-century, we have lost 3 billion birds in North America—an alarming trend skewed heavily toward migratory species. This precipitous loss is a powerful statement about the condition of our planet and a harbinger of things to come if we don’t act strategically and decisively.

Across our state, birds like the Olive-sided Flycatcher face a dire future if the current pace of climate change and habitat loss continues. This beloved species has seen nearly an 80 percent population loss over the past 50 years, an unambiguous reality that serves as a call to action to scale our work in order to meet the size and severity of these threats.

It is this urgency that led us to launch our *Flight Plan*, Audubon’s bold five-year strategic plan, which codifies our evolution into a truly hemispheric organization.

***Flight Plan* is about protecting birds, and at the same time, protecting people and our planet by advancing a generation-shaping agenda at the forefront of conservation.**

Beyond boundaries and across vast distances, most migratory birds only spend a fraction of their annual cycle in our state. To protect them, we need to literally meet them where they are. By studying their migrations and extensive breeding ranges, we can address the dizzying array of conservation challenges they face.

It is your investment and our shared impact that will allow us to achieve hemispheric outcomes—this is how we will bend the bird curve and reverse the decline of birds across the Americas.

Thank you and onward!

**David Krause**

VICE PRESIDENT, AUDUBON ALASKA

## BIRDS TELL US. THIS IS HOW WE LISTEN.

Thanks to game-changing science and new digital technologies, we are narrowing knowledge gaps that have long plagued the world of bird conservation. Lesser Yellowlegs, for example, make an annual migratory journey from the Boreal Forest in Canada to Chile—a round trip

of nearly 20,000 miles. Last year, four Lesser Yellowlegs originally tagged in Colombia’s Cauca Valley with transmitters—four single birds spread against the mammoth skies of the Western Hemisphere—flew past Audubon-installed Motus towers located in Michigan and

Pennsylvania, like towers located at Copper River Delta here in Alaska. These towers captured critical data revealing secrets of the birds’ migratory adventures, giving new revelations and insight into where, when, and how long they sought habitats needed to provide safe rest and food.

# Audubon’s *Flight Plan*:

A Powerful and Dynamic Story of Migratory Science, Climate Action, and Community Building

**OUR SCIENCE IS CLEAR.** We are in a critical moment for birds, people, and the planet. Climate change and biodiversity loss are near full crisis, and the window of opportunity remains open—if we act now.

The most ambitious strategic effort in our history, *Audubon’s Flight Plan* establishes our vision for shaping a world where birds and people thrive, elevating Audubon as a global conservation leader. *Flight Plan* sets five-year milestones in key areas to track progress towards our long-term vision to ‘bend the bird curve,’ in other words, to halt and reverse the alarming decline of birds.

Our recognition of the interconnectedness of people, place, and climate led to the development of four milestones we intend to reach over the next five years: Habitat Conservation, Climate, Policy, and Community Building.

## MILESTONES:



**HABITAT CONSERVATION**  
Using science to identify, protect, and conserve 300 million acres of bird habitat across the Americas



**CLIMATE ACTION**  
Deploying 100 gigawatts of renewable energy and storing 30 billion tons of carbon through natural climate solutions



**POLICY LEADERSHIP**  
Pairing diplomacy with advocacy to develop and implement bird-friendly solutions

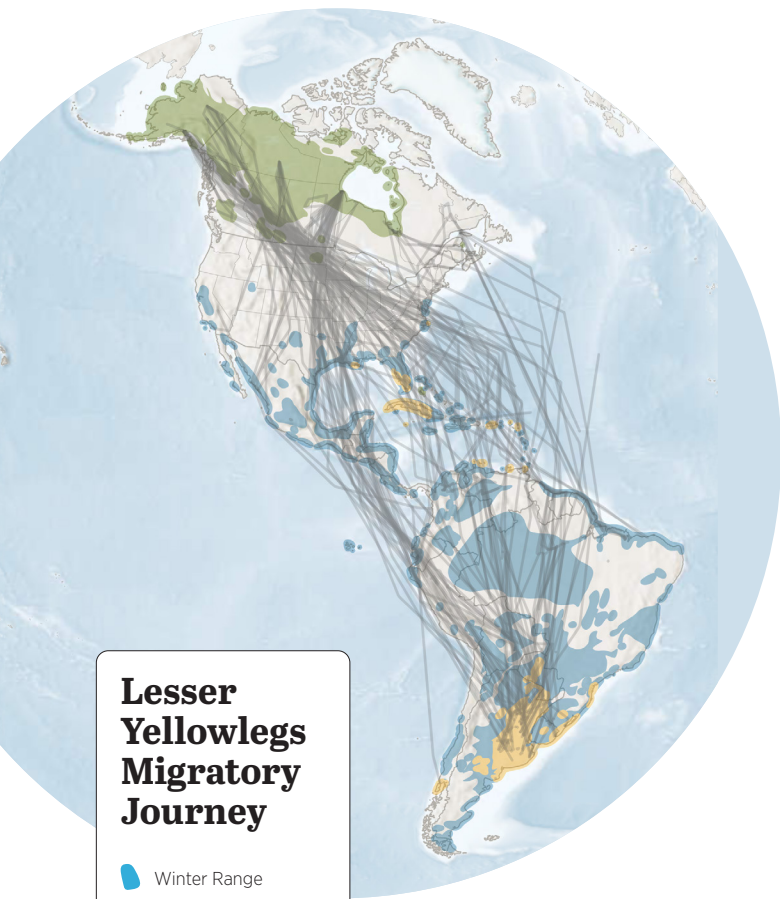


**COMMUNITY BUILDING**  
Creating a diverse network of bird lovers working together to advance our shared vision



**Bald Eagle.**  
Photo: Gerald Alt/  
Audubon Photography  
Awards

**AUDUBON’S HEMISPHERIC APPROACH TO CONSERVATION** directs our efforts to the places where birds need us most and to all the places they call home; their seasonal migration across the Western Hemisphere means Audubon also works from boreal Canada to the Carolinas to Chile and beyond.



**Lesser Yellowlegs Migratory Journey**

- Winter Range
- Summer
- Year-Round
- Journey of a Tracked Bird

Audubon’s Bird Migration Explorer provides a clearer-than-ever look at bird migration and the incredible journey of individual species. Here we see how Lesser Yellowlegs in the Great Plains require us to work beyond our borders to ensure it remains safe and healthy throughout its annual cycle.

In the past year, we have made progress towards our milestones—much of which has touched down in our state—and developed operational plans to continue driving this work forward.

Guided by our *Flight Plan*, we are engaging in conservation on 116,650,000 acres across the Americas and influencing 50 renewable energy generation and transmission projects totaling 34 gigawatts—enough energy to power roughly 25 million homes.

**HIGHLIGHTS OVER THE PAST YEAR INCLUDE EFFORTS TO:**

- **Launch Audubon’s Conservation Ranching Program in Wisconsin,** building on our success in fourteen other states where more than 100 ranches covering nearly 3 million acres have earned status as Audubon Certified bird-friendly land.
- **Fund seven new projects for protected areas in Perú and six in Bolivia** through *Conserva Aves*, totaling over 1.9 million acres.
- **Break ground on the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion, the single-largest ecosystem restoration project in U.S. history;** this project will restore and strengthen up to 28,000 acres of wetlands in Louisiana, providing climate resiliency benefits to local communities.
- **Begin new engagement on a \$10 billion transmission project** spanning seven Midwestern states representing up to 20 gigawatts.
- **Deliver 10,000 acre-feet of water to benefit Great Salt Lake and Jordan River** through local partnerships and co-management of the Great Salt Lake Watershed Enhancement Trust.
- **Convene 11 Indigenous Guardians and leaders from five First Nations,** key partners on our work in Canada, at Hog Island Audubon Camp in Maine for knowledge exchange and training opportunities.

Through our studies resulting in conservation planning and action to protect vital areas such as the Teshekpuk Lake wetlands complex, Audubon Alaska is ahead of the game and leading Audubon’s *Flight Plan* by amplifying our voice and implementing innovative conservation efforts. Here in Alaska and across the Americas, we are aligning our vision to identify connected, climate-resilient places across the hemisphere where we are focusing our efforts for the greatest impact.

# Audubon's Work in Action. Unified by the Power of Birds.



Pacific Loon.  
Photo: Joshua  
Galicki/  
Audubon  
Photography  
Awards

## HABITAT CONSERVATION

### Conserving quality, connected, and climate-resilient bird habitat

→ Audubon Alaska is a steering committee member of the Arctic Defense Campaign, a coalition of conservation and Indigenous organizations working to safeguard America's Arctic ecosystems. These efforts focus on the 19.6-million-acre Arctic Refuge, where birds migrate from across the United States and six continents to feed, nest, and raise young, and the 23-million-acre Western Arctic,

one of the most ecologically important places on Earth. The Western Arctic is the nation's largest tract of public land and is home to polar bears, wolves, moose, one of the largest caribou herds in the world, and birds traveling from every continent and dispersing along all four major North American flyways. This landscape is also crucial for subsistence resources and practices.

Through innovative conservation and community engagement strategies, Audubon Alaska is ahead of the game and leading Audubon's *Flight Plan* by amplifying our voice and implementing creative conservation efforts aligned with our hemispheric vision to identify connected, climate-resilient places across the hemisphere where we are focusing our efforts for the greatest impact.

→ Working with Audubon's Science team, Audubon Alaska analyzed and spotlighted Important Bird Areas under threat from extractive mining operations.

This work included the Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve near the Chilkat Indian Village of Klukwan, home to the world's largest congregation of Bald Eagles and where 18 percent of the global population of Surf Scoters occur during spring migration.

→ Through strategic storytelling, we highlighted important regions like the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta in Southwest Alaska.

This landscape supports 7 million Arctic-breeding shorebirds—including the majority of six North American populations. We also profiled the Safety Sound Important Bird Area on the Seward Peninsula, an area that draws birders and photographers from around the world.



CLIMATE ACTION

## Ensuring resilience and protecting carbon-rich ecosystems

→ **Alaska’s D-1 public lands** (called this as they were withdrawn from mineral entry under Sec. 17(d)(1) of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act in 1971) are vital to biodiversity, Alaska Native communities, and ecosystem resilience. These lands are crucial to sequestering large amounts of carbon and we helped safeguard 28 million acres in 2025.

→ **Audubon Alaska continued the promotion of the Southeast Alaska Birding Trail and its associated mobile application.** This birding trail was designed to foster sustainable economic development that is

built around the bioregion and helps grow Alaska’s economy through bird tourism. Most of the trail is located within the Tongass National Forest, which holds more than 20 percent of all carbon stored in U.S. national forests.

→ **The trail highlights the importance of birding sites like Taashuyee-Chookan.aani, also known as the globally recognized Mendenhall Wetlands Important Bird Area.** We work with multiple partners in Juneau in Áak’w Kwáan Territory to defend this important wetlands complex for birds, people, and the environment.

Tongass National Forest. Photo: Alan Wu/Flickr CC BY-SA 2.0



POLICY LEADERSHIP

## Advancing our *Healthy Birds, Healthy Planet* policy agenda

→ Following Audubon advocacy, the Biden administration announced new **protections for more than 13 million acres of America’s Western Arctic** and is now considering additional protections for new Special Areas within the region.

→ **Advocacy from Audubon’s policy experts and 32,158 letter writers** helped influence the Department of the Interior’s decision to finalize protections for 28 million acres of undeveloped D-1 lands across Alaska.

→ **Another Audubon advocacy win: The Biden administration selected the “No Action Alternative” for the proposed Ambler Road.** This decision denied the permit for what would have been a private, industrial corridor to multiple open-pit copper mines, directly impacting the ways of life for 66 Alaska Native villages in the region. The Brooks Range is home to the Western Arctic Caribou Herd and the Kobuk and Koyukuk river fisheries, two critical food sources for the surrounding Indigenous and rural communities.



Juvenile **American Golden Plover**  
Photo: Scott Heron/Flickr (CC BY-SA 2.0)



Left: Bird banding of a Varied Thrush during the **Yakutat Tern Festival** in Yakutat, Alaska on June 1, 2024. Photo: Sydney Walsh/Audubon

Below: Birders at the 2024 **Whale and Bird Fest** on Prince of Wales Island, Alaska. Photo: Molly Simonson



COMMUNITY BUILDING

## Working together across the hemisphere to advance our shared vision

→ For the second year, Audubon Alaska, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and other regional entities sponsored and supported the **Utqiagvik Migratory Bird Festival**. Audubon staff and chapter members also attended the annual Barrow Arctic Research Center’s Science & Culture Fair in Utqiagvik where we presented on the importance of America’s Arctic to migratory birds and interacted with youth through bird walks and hands-on activities.

→ Audubon staff were on the ground for the 2024 **Prince of Wales Whale and Bird Fest** where we met with community members, presented on Audubon products like the Bird Migration Explorer and the Southeast Alaska Birding Trail mobile app, and birded on the shores of the Tongass National Forest.

→ Alaska’s annual birding events honor culture and art, benefit tourism and local economies, highlight conservation issues, and truly celebrate birds. Audubon staff and board members attended and participated in the Copper River Delta Shorebird Festival in Cordova, the Kachemak Bay Shorebird Festival in Homer, and the Yakutat Tern Festival.



**We are deeply grateful** for your continued commitment to Audubon and our mission to protect birds and the places they need—in Alaska and beyond. In the first year of *Flight Plan*, we have made significant progress towards our habitat and climate milestones. We could not have gained such momentum without you. The challenge before us is clear. Act now or risk a future with skies silenced with loss. With your help, we will bend the bird curve and make a sustainable impact for birds across the hemisphere. **This is our moment.**



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**Whimbrel.**  
Photo: Kate Persons/Audubon  
Photography Awards

Cover: **Lesser Yellowlegs.**  
Photo: Evi Meyer/Audubon  
Photography Awards



ALASKA